No.1-2006 MONTHLY ENSO DISCUSSION FOR MICRONESIA AND AMERICAN SAMOA

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The Pacific ENSO Applications Center (PEAC) disseminated the forth quarter 2005 newsletter, and is preparing the first quarter 2006 newsletter. The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) stated the following in its January 12, 2006 *ENSO Diagnostic Discussion* (refer to http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov): "Equatorial SST anomalies greater than +0.5ºC were restricted to the region between Indonesia and 165ºE during December, while negative anomalies less than -0.5ºC were observed at most locations between the date line and the South American coast." Surface and subsurface temperature anomalies have decreased between 180º and the South American coast, while equatorial surface winds have been stronger than average over the central and western Pacific. As a result, the CPC concludes: "Collectively, the present oceanic and atmospheric anomalies are consistent with the development of La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific."

The latest climate forecast models range from El Niño-neutral conditions to weak La Niña conditions into mid-2006, indicating some uncertainty in the forecasts. However, over the last several months, the trends in the model forecasts have been toward cooler equatorial SSTs. Thus, the CPC is anticipating weak La Niña conditions for the next 3-6 months.

At this time, it appears that for Micronesia and American Samoa, tropical cyclone development and movement patterns will be displaced toward the west in response to La Niña, and sea levels will be slightly higher than normal due to the strong trade winds. If La Niña conditions persist, rainfall over the northern hemisphere Micronesian islands equator ward of 9ºN will likely be wetter than normal as the trade wind trough intensifies. Rainfall in American Samoa will remain above normal as long as the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ) remains near the islands.

We do not see any extended periods of dry weather significant enough to cause drought conditions on most of the Micronesian or American Samoan islands. But in the northern Marshall Islands, conditions could continue to be significantly drier than normal.

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